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GUILT

AND

OTHER POEMS

BY

A NEW AUTHOR,

WALTER WILDE.

PRICE FIFTY CENTS.

Shores

TOWANDA, PA.:
PRINTED BY GOODENOUGH & CLAUSON.
1871.

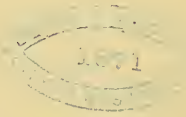
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PREFACE TO GUILT.

Thou tiny offspring of my brain,
Child of my early years;
Conceived in hope, brought forth in pain,
And cherished long with tears.

I now release thee to thy fate,
A waif upon life's stream;
Exposed to bear a critic's hate,
His jealousy and spleen.

Perchance to never see the light,
As one untimely born,
A never-ending cheerless night,
A never-coming morn.

Yet still thou art, thou wretched waif,
Of my own soul a part;
Thou sharest still the greater half,
My undivided heart.

GUILT.

OF all that broke the gates of hell, and o'er
The Earth obtained control, the mightiest
And most renowned was Guilt. His form was gaunt
And bent, resembling age; upon his face
Sat haggard woe and care. His tearless eye
Shone glittering beneath his heavy brow,
And save that ever and anon a sigh
Escaped, he mastered well the deep and strong
Emotions of his breast. Now Innocence
Beheld, and fled as from infectious plague.
He wandered lone and sad o'er hill and vale;
Nor to clear springs, or lakes, or crystal streams
He came, unless in mist or darkness veiled,
Lest he should see himself reflected there.
He long had wandered sad, oppressed with grief,
'Mid tangled wilds, and wastes, and deserts bare;
But now he came unto a spacious cave,
Whose dark and somber front invited to
Repose. And here for many months he lay,
Enjoying one perpetual night. There came
No visions to disturb his sleep, or to
Amuse his wakeful hours. Well had it been
If he in dreamless solitude had still
Remained. At length he hears the murmuring sound

Of many voices, and arousing up
Beheld the cave with flambeaux glare
Illumed, while 'round him stand forms once to him
Familiar, now unwelcome guests, whom he
Had least desired should find his place of rest.
Yet he forbore to speak, for well he knew
Some great occasion called, else these would not
His presence seek, but would prefer to fly
From him, and seek for pleasure or repose.
First, Malice bending low addressed him thus,
With words whose cadence fell like some sad dirge
Upon his list'ning ear. "O Chief! we all
"Regret thus to disturb your sleep profound,
"But this green earth, so prosperous, so grand,
"So bright and beautiful, does not unto
"Our sway as thou didst promise now incline,
"But rather seems resolved to follow ways
"Of virtue and of peace, of industry
"And social joys. And should there but arise
"E'en with the child harsh words of passion, lo!
"Doth he now hear, from lips whose youthful lisp
"May not with plainness speak, of the dread mark
"Of Cain, who did his brother slay but with
"An angry blow. And thus is peace restored.
"Also the Patriarch oft to his sons
"Recounts, how God did brand displeasure on
"His brow, and cast him forth a vagabond
"Upon the face of the fair earth, which brings
"To others all a plenteous supply.
"Meanwhile, thy servants have observed that true
"And faithful diligence, belonging to
"The trust reposed in us, yet have prevailed
"In naught." Then Guilt arose and thus replied:
"Existence measures not the sum of years,

"Nor marks the oft returning seasons as
"They move perpetual, in ever ceaseless round,
"But joys and griefs—these weigh man to the tomb,
"And make of life a lengthened dream, and paint
"The visions which survive the wreck of time,
"And chronicle the hours eternity
"Unfolds to those who fill its vast profound,
"Of ages limitless with deeds of good
"Or ill. Thus childhood walks in flow'ry paths,
"And lives in the sensations of new life,
"More years than all the numbers which crowd through
"His after days. And so might manhood pass
"With vivid hopes, and warm enjoyments still,
"And days would seem as long, and life as sweet,
"And memory as perfect, as when first
"He learned the world; had not the frost of Death
"With blighting mildew stole life's vigor and
"Its freshness, ere its morning brightness yields
"To fervid hours of noon. Since life derives
"Its source the same, and spirits bloom in youth
"Immortal, thence as joyous youth, in clear
"And sparkling brilliance, paints with sunbeams that
"Each scene acquires the substance of a ray,
"Each hope in soft dissolving colors blends
"The iris tints, as bright as those that weave
"The zone of heaven embracing earth. Such is
"The state of innocence, that thrilling joys
"Forever welling in the breast diffuse a calm
"And sweet delight. And innocence is but
"The law of love—the office of kind deeds
"Expressed in living acts. Alike this law
"Expansive runs from lowest sense to God.
"Behold the man whose life concordant is
"To ways of peace—beset by many foes

"On every side—he like the arrow straight,
"Direct through veering currents swiftly flies.
"With those who seek for pleasure he hath naught;
"Yet more of happiness to him doth fall,
"Than doth to others who intent pursue,
"Through lands remote and smiling verdant isles.
"Not to sequestered vales, or distant hills
"Your way doth lie, where shepherds tend their flocks;
"For these are virtue's ancient fair domains."
Then Guile complaisant thus replied: "'Tis not,
"Dear Chief, my object now to disapprove
"Thy well delivered counsel, yet would I,
"With thy permission granted, speak of what
"Pertains unto our commonwealth, wherein
"Is man for our convenience formed, and to
"Be tried 'so as by fire.' Consider now
"The means at our command. Earth hath a store
"Of minerals and gems, of untold wealth.
"From pastoral pursuits let us now turn
"The mind of man. Let Avarice, Deceit,
"Ambition, all be well employed. And let
"Thy vesture too be changed. For gayest hues
"Lay sackcloth by, and in this work be thou
"The Chief, as both by power and wisdom fit."
Then Guilt made signal with his hand to all—
They straight retiring left him, now alone,
And thus in meditation he indulged:
"Sweet sleep, with calm forgetfulness, farewell!
"I shall revisit thee perchance no more.
"And thou deep shade, which art the mantle of
"Eternity, I bid thee, too, farewell.
"Hence shall my footsteps wander, as I frame
"Resolve, what means may best result in the
"Complete and total overthrow of good;

"And in its place establish ill. But first,
"The way of vice shall be o'erstrewn with flowers,
"And groves on either side resound with soft,
"Enchanting melody. And here shall walk
"My servants, whom I will make princes, lords,
"And rulers of the realm. This way shall seem
"Most fit to walk therein, and much to be
"Preferred to virtue's rugged path; but lo,
"It leadeth surely to the gates of death!"
Thus musing forth with slow and measured step
He went unto a mountain, whence the Earth
Outspreading far before him lay—a map
With forests and with grassy meads portrayed,
Death, on the summit of a summer's cloud,
Above some vast devoted city, where
The plague her yellow harvest ripe cuts down,
Reposes on a molten throne of gold,
With softest ermine overspread; so Guilt
Serene, sat on the mountain's height. He sees
The ways, the walk, the manners, customs, laws,
The politics and faith of man—observes
The arts, which captivate and lead astray.
Then he arose and went unto the shore
That bounds the ocean's flow and thus he spake
Unto the watery flood: "Send forth your mists,
"Those exhalations now that rise, and let
"Them come and stand in solid marble walls;
"In beauty let them stand as temples and
"As palaces, towers, battlements." And lo!
The flood obeyed. The mists stood up opaque;
In solid grandeur stood magnificent;
And busy throngs with hurried steps, passed to
And fro in streets that showed a city paved.
He spake again. "Here come with swiftest wing

"Borne on the billows' waste ye ships. Here bring
"From every clime the precious ore, rich wrought
"The fabric fine, and food delectable."
The ships drew near, and thick as forest pines
They stood; and here exchange with nations all
The treasures vast, of gold and silver, pearls
And precious stones, of myrrh and balm, of corn
And wine. With even tread, the caravan
Winds stately o'er the desert plain and bears
Inland afar, the rich productions of
The sea, perfume and spice of fragrant isles,
The luscious drops from aromatic boughs,
The texture fine and skillful wove the woofs,
Embellishments equal and accurate,
By nice adjusted looms produced; or else
Luxuriant in needlework sublime;
And ornaments that blaze or glow, dazzle
Or scintillate, of every hue. All these
Their tribute pay. All these combine to raise
In wealth, and grandeur vast above compeers
This city, where in majesty the throne
Of kingdoms stood, whose scepter awed in fear
The tribes afar—whose laws and faith ran with
The circling sun. Not only were her wealth
And power vast, beyond what we can now
Compare, but she was blessed with fairest skies,
That ne'er dropped down the snows, intense with cold
Or hard congealed the frozen hail, but that
Oft slaked the thirsty earth with genial rain.
There might be seen the palm, and cedars tall,
Whose highest boughs seemed in the sky, and trees
That goodly were for shade, and trellised vines
O'erarching walks, with flowers strewed profuse,
That contemplation would approve a smile.

From these look up the dizzying heights, where gleam
In solid luster white, abodes of kings,
With such exact proportions wrought, that each
Of many parts composed but seems one vast
Perfected whole. Or look beyond where is
The scene with temples graced majestic, and
With yellow rays of brightly burnished gold
Reflected thence. Or yet around, what walls
Defend, what gates protect, what guards shut out,
What towers and battlements environ thee
On every side? Or where the crystalline
Doth meet the earth, behold those mountains stand
Encircling this—a place as if 'twere barred
By heaven, save the narrow straight that joins
In one the ocean wide with this, that seems
An inland sea, or where defile winds through
To distant plains beyond, where harvests large
The sweaty reapers' toils repay, and sounds
Of tinkling bell steal o'er the ear. Thus is
Secure from outward foe, one gate by sea,
One gate by land except. Thus Guilt,
A site to be the world's metropolis
Fixed on and there presided o'er; but not
As sovereign, though oft he trode in courts,
And oft the streets, and entered oft the domes,
Came to the chamber where lay sleepless forms,
Sometimes by multitudes was seen and heard,
But oftener, with stealthy tread unseen
He glided through the crowds of passers by.
Say where in climes remote or near at hand
Stood this, the populous and powerful?
What era chronicled in time was laid
Her corner stones? What name inscribed was hers?
Her date is fixed before the age of Troy.

Her name, her founder's name, alike was Guilt.
Within her courts was gayety and sound
Of viols soft, where join the circle gay
In dance, while lamps their softest lustre shed
O'er lovely forms bedecked with gems, that glow
In woven wreaths like stars that garnish o'er
The sky. On every side what matchless splendor glows.
Behold yon statues how divinely wrought,
What skill displays the cast that genius lends
The graceful form, and stamps the hero's brow;
And paintings rare and beautiful, of kings
And conquerors in coats of mail, or dressed
In coronation robes, of landscapes gay,
With smiling cottages, and lovely lakes,
And mountains clad in richest vernal hues;
The train the monarch led in pageantry,
Displaying spoils of war from distant lands.
In tapestry are seen the champions
That fight in single combat and decide
The fate of arms, and gloomy fortresses,
Took by surprise, by storm or stratagem,
Their massive walls thrown down or undermined;
The city's pillage 'midst devouring flames.
Historic deeds commemorative of,
That settled all the realms in empire one,
By ancestors performed of those who now
Have met, in revelry to spend the night.
There sat in quiet thought, retired from gaze
Direct an uninvited guest. And thus
His musings ran: "Behold that haughty form,
"With glittering star, ensign of royalty.
"Is happiness within—whose acts show that
"He dreads each morsel that he eats, each cup
"That bears his drink, each sword that guards his sleep,

"The kneeling suppliant imploring grace,
"Whose eye severely scans each day precise;
"The mien and countenance of those he chose,
"His favored friends. Nor dares in solitude
"To pass a single day, whose nights afford
"No quiet peaceful rest, refreshing sleep,
"Who lives in dread of death before his time.
"How many toil, deprived of all that man
"May claim as a reward, their naked limbs
"Exposed to scorching heat, their bodies, bent
"By grievous weights imposed, or in the mine
"'Mid damp and noisome vapors rank; urged on
"Unto their utmost strength that one may live
"In splendid guise." Then Guilt stepped forth among
The guests; his mood was pensive, yet a smile
Oft played upon his face. Nor wanting was
The airy jest, the quick reply, when was
Occasion first. In dance he graceful moved,
And lightly quaffed the red and sparkling wine.
But now the tables groan with food piled high.
To suit the nice fastidious taste, were sweets
And tarts and savory bits, which epicures
Employ to urge the absent appetite.
In festive glee and blithesome song they spend
The hour of gay repast. When done, the Lyre
Was brought, and still in list'ning attitude
Was each inclined, to catch the faintest sound;
Then stepped the Lyrist forth, a youth he seemed,
With eyes of blue, and golden hair that waved
As light as passing breeze. Then he commenced,
And to his Lyre, which all the while responds
"In sweetest melody began: "My Lyre
"Of aught inanimate e'er lives, then thou
"Dost feel along the chords the thrill of life

"That wakes an ecstacy and trembling joy,
"Beguiling man his tears. I've loved thy sweet
"Converse, soft as the zephyr's wing and soothing all
"The stormy passions that disturb the breast,
"Thou hast of deeds heroic often sang,
"And which pertains unto the glory of
"Our state. The pæan song triumphal
"Hast often led, and all that worthy was,
"Thy lays did celebrate. But now, alas!
"I know a spell is on thy strings, for I
"Can nothing sing but love. Ye walls attend,
"And vibrate soft, ye statues breathe fresh life,
"With glances warm, relax your stony gaze,
"And chiefly you ye fairest forms of Earth
"Attentive list while I relate of love.
"Young love had broke the gates of heaven, and thence
"Escaped; o'er all the Earth he roamed at will,
"At length unto the bower of beauty came,
"A sultry summer afternoon. Asleep
"Before him beauty lay. The wanton wind
"Had cast her gauzy covering aside,
"And then had died. Love gazed upon the round
"And smoothly polished limb—the perfect full
"And gently heaving breast, each feature scanned,
"Saw nought but loveliness, and yet she was
"As yonder statue, calm, and white and pure.
"Love said: 'I am a god. To re-create,
"A subject here before me lies'. He plucked
"The lily and the rose, their softest hues
"He laid upon her cheek, then stooping down
"He kissed her lips, and soon her face o'erspread
"With blushes, dimples, smiles. She trembling woke;
"Love met her eyes; alas! for him, for in
"That fatal gaze he lost his sight. And thus

"'Tis said of Love: 'Twas beauty made him blind.'
"Jove saw his plight, and in revenge gave him
"The bow, and arrows gave, and bade him shoot,
"With instinct's true unerring aim;
"No arrow flies amiss its chosen mark,
"Now beauty's self complains with sighs and tears,
"That in her heart the shaft of Love remains."
Then Guilt glides through unseen, the outer gate,
And swift he wends his way until he came
Unto a jagged cliff, that overlooks
The sea, and thus he spake: "Hear me, ye winds,
"Whose sport is tempest-wrecks all idly strown.
"Go ye with softest step where revelers,
"With song and sparkling wine and dance,
"Do spend the somber hours of night—who gloat
"Their eyes on forms they deem surpassing fair,
"With headache and with languor fill, until
"I shall prepare at length more potent ills."
Then straight he went unto the gates of hell;
He needed not a convocation to
Assemble, that he might be heard, for hell
To utmost bound was ever sensitive
When e'er he spake. And thus her fiends addressed:
"All ye who have from Earth descended here
"Before your time; have fell from hand of the
"Assassin, unprepared to stand before
"The bar of God, a respite hence I grant,
"That ye may execute upon the sons
"Of men my purpose and your delight.
"Go ye and tread the Earth—on this, my sole
"Condition, go—ye shall with lying words
"Deceive the multitude that seek for signs,
"And trust not in the providence of God.
"If called by magii then ye shall appear

"And feign yourselves the sons of heaven. Disguised
"These sons ye shall by imitation seem,
"Unmasked, ye shall afflict the bad—shall haunt
"The scenes in which ye fell. Not yours the task
"To prompt to actions bad. This leave to those
"That fell from spheres of light." Then like a host
Of flying locusts, filling all the air
With darkest clouds in night—so then advanced
Those murdered ghosts, and ere the sun had shed
His beams, had settled all the realms of Earth,
While Guilt in haste, fast gathered up the dust
That strewed the way of frequent concourse there,
And cast it on the winds of Earth to spread
Contagion in horrid forms. Meanwhile
The Lyrist's song went on, with compliments
To those who heard attentive, while he sung
In rapturous strains of love. And many wept,
Yet smiling through their tears, so strong the sway
Of love in passion's ecstacy. But not
The infinite unbounded love of God
He sung, nor plans advised that should bind up
A single wound, alleviate distress,
Or would a benefit bestow on those
Who heard. And had not Guilt his purpose fixed,
He had not seized occasion trivial such
As this to vent his spite, but rather had
Been pleased to find from seeming pure at first,
It quite lascivious became. When done
The dance went on, and wine in circles fleet
Again went swiftly round. Thus pass the hours
Until faint streaks of light steal o'er the sky
Portentous of the morn. At length the sun
Climbs o'er the verge that separates the day
From night, when stretched on softest couch lay those

Who gayest seemed the night before. In drowse
They feel dull pain pervading all their frame,
Or as unconsciousness creeps on, night hags
Are ever ready there to bind their nerves
With bands of steel. But why delay? The day
Was passed, which was as bright as other days;
Yet ere its close was found in quiet grove,
Where he for meditation had retired,
With severed head the Lyrist's form. His Lyre
Lay broken by his side. By envy done
The deed. Nor yet the muse can pause to shed
A tear; such is the fate of genius in
The world. Now while in brightness shone the sun,
There walked as oft in innocence before,
The fairest form of earth; upon her cheek
Was passion's glowing flame, ignited from
Love's altar by the Lyrist's witching song.
Her way wound through a thick and tangled copse
And near a bright pellucid stream, where was
A pool—but deep and clear, and hid from sight.
But why relate sad virtue's piteous fall?
The muse doth grieve that one so passing fair
Should be so frail—that from her cheek the rose
Should be so rudely snatched and thrown away.
Now shadows creep o'er all the vales and wrap
In darkness the wide plain and mountains round—
Deep gloom in thickest blackness comes, and it
Is night. There lay beside her, whom his love
Had pledged, one who by vows had led from paths
Of rectitude a being fair; and yet
Whose easy virtue he had deemed fit theme
For merriment till she, desponding, sought
An early grave. But now he starts in fear
As he beholds her come. With solemn step

And slow, she wends her way, and at his side
She stands and fixes gaze severe. Cold sweat
Now gathers on his forehead. Shaken with
A palsy's unresisting force he lies;
He hears a shriek as if in anguish wrung,
And she is gone. Yet oft 'tis said returns
This spirit and bodes of future ills. Away
On billows borne was he who sought to flee
The stroke decreed for those whose hands imbrue
Another's blood. He looked, and soon descries
Approaching sail as borne by swiftest winds;
And lo! there stands him whom he met and slew,
Nor pity showed, nor prayers allowed. He starts
In fear, yet tripped by hatches falls into
The sea; and as his dying wail is lost
The phantom ship dissolves from sight. There sat
Amid his hoarded dust, the miser wan
With care. Around him flocked those he had drove
Unalmsed away, though perishing with want.
And yet he knew his doors were barred against
Ingress. Whence then had entered these, to him,
Most hated visitors, that seemed to beg
In plaintive accents, told of pressing wants?
These nightly came to mock his grudging soul,
By prayers, or fiercely take what he withheld.
In troops these ghosts walked round the Earth, nor stopped
Wherever angel guard did watch the sleep
Of innocence. Amazement fills the hearts
Of kings and people all at sights like these.
Then hasten to their temples, bring the kine,
And sacrifice to sun, and moon, and stars,
To figures wrought of wood, and stone, and brass;
Of silver and of gold, in forms of man,
Beasts, fishes, insects, reptiles, birds. And call

With loudest voice upon their gods for help,
That shades of men no more may walk the Earth.
Yet vengeance crying from the ground, appeals
To God and wakes His wrath, for Earth is filled
With violence. The saints and prophets of
The Most High walked amid her cliffs, and caves,
And dens, in sheepskins and in goatskins clad,
Were persecuted, afflicted, tormented;
Were sawn in sunder, thrown to beasts, stoned, slain;
Of whom the world was not worthy. And God
Doth see. Parched was the ground—no rain the heavens
Afford—hot as a furnace glowed the sun,
And there was dearth and famine in the land;
Men's hearts did fail for fear. The Earth her mouth
Opened wide and swallowed cities up,
In ruins broken down the walls, and laid
In dust were palaces. Or deeply sunk
Beneath the wave were seen their gilded spires.
The winds no longer pure, spread death and pain
In many horrid forms. The leper groped
Beside the stagnant pool, and bathed his brow,
Burned with the fire that sears within, and wet
His parched lips, and cried to all that passed:
Unclean! unclean! The dread sirocco's blast
In hazy glare laid low the caravan,
And sweeping far, entered the camp and strewed,
Ere battle came, the dead. Smote by severe
And sudden pain, the strong man gasps in death.
On every hand are seen the corpses of
Those who but now had walked as if they feared
Not boding ills. And in the streets, they lay
In heaps. Nor cared the ox for toil. The horse
At large, selects his food as suits him best,
Nor yet observes his master, while doth rage

The pestilence. Man flies his foe and seeks
Escape. Inveterate the plague pursues
Him still. No place is sacred—none where he
Can find retreat secure. And now the ships
Rode free upon the surge, and careless of
The guiding helm. At length was stayed the stroke,
That desolation should no more invade
The land. The city Guilt for ills reserved,
Was at its highest pitch of power and pride;
Excessive were her luxuries, vain her
Displays. These draw afar the idle crowds,
Whose envious eyes behold profuse the stores
Of untold wealth. The nation's eager thirst
For spoil is roused, and then confederate
They form, and like a pack of hungry wolves
Descend for plunder. Yet the pass with troops
Was guarded well by land, by forts, the pass
At sea. But when the foe arrives, with ease
Do bribes compass what might could never do.
Thus soon the gates give way, and then in flames
Were wrapped her domes, in gore was laid her sons.
With spoils enriched, his homeward way the foe
Pursues. Before him songs proclaim his deeds,
Behind the vulture reaps the last rewards
Of victory. An age went by, and Guilt
Again walked through the streets that once belonged
To her; he called his name upon. And lo!
In ruins mouldered pleasant palaces,
And where was once the scene of gayety,
Was now the den of unclean beasts, the cage
Of unclean birds. Heaps stood in place of walls
And fortresses. The ruin wide brought back
Reflections of her ancient state, for here
Were broken columns, ruined arches—these

Immense in magnitude, were wrought in forms
Of beauty, symmetry and grace.
Guilt smiled as he surveyed the wreck, nor stayed
More time that would suffice to overlook
This vast and dreary solitude of art;
Then straight he went his way to other lands.

Ll. PENSERO.

From murky towns afar I rove,
'Mid forest shades, where woodnymphs oft
Steal forth, with footsteps fleet and soft,
And beauteous forms of fondest love.

Where pale wild flowers do sweetly bloom,
And mosses, every hue, are spread;
Where bowers protect my aching head,
And temper the hot breath of noon.

Who shall from this, "The muses' seat,"
Tempt me to stray through dusty fields;
Though wealth, the daily travel yields,
And leave this blest obscure retreat.

Alas! I must full soon exchange,
For bliss, for love, and "Sacred song;"
A war for conquest with the strong,
Among a people rude and strange.

Through dusty streets my feet must go,
Through dull and dreary towns afar,
Though wearied all my senses are,
And though my heart be full of woe.

FAIRY-LAND.

In the dells my feet have wandered,
Seeking for the pretty fairies,
Over hills of greenest verdure,
Over meadows soft as velvet:
Gayest landscapes lay before me,
Brightest flowers, and glades the deepest,
Light, the mildest, there was streaming;
Brooklets ran with music sweetest,
And a song I could not hinder,
Woke the echoes from their slumber.

O, Fairies bright, with eyes of light,
And wings of gossamer;
Now tell me true if I may view,
The place your dwellings are.

That pretty place your blithesome race
Have chosen for their clan;
Must be as nice as Paradise,
Delightful Fairy-land.

Soon a voice beside me singing,
Made reply in dulcet music;
Like the sound of bells of silver,
Struck with lightest tiny hammers.

In childhood's way, the fairies stray,
The livelong happy hours;
Where lovers walk, where lovers talk,
Or rest in sweetest bowers.

Should waking eyes their forms surprise,
Now standing still or sitting;
Then soon you'll see that they will be,
Flying swift, or flitting.

In dreams alone, behold their throne,
Among the mighty mountains;
There is their queen, the fairest seen,
Beside the sparkling fountains.

MARGARET.

I.

'TIS autumn's saddest days. The wintry frost
Hath blasted leaves and flowers, and mournfully
The wind sighs o'er the wreck of beauty lost.
Now oft the rain, with somber clouds we see,
As even nature, not from pain was free,
But wept pure crystal tears, her hapless doom;
And life resigns the plant and aged tree;
Earth shall, with vestments clean and white, full soon
Commit herself, with all her frailties, to the tomb.

II.

Yet there shall stand amid this dreary waste,
The hardy shrub, all freshly green and fair;
Defying snow and ice, and in the face
Of death inhale the freezing wintry air.
This shall no useless weeds of mourning wear,
But richly dressed in nature's livery;
Think not its icy heart no grief may share:
Its drooping boughs shall hang all tearfully
Above the earth, where even they will buried be.

III.

This is, in truth, a melancholy tale;
Let those unused to weep at fancied woe,
Pause here; for even now, bright cheeks are pale,
And eyes all wet with tears are drooping low,
That fate should ruthless mark her courses so.
There's mourning in the stately gothic hall;
The door soft closes, and the foot falls slow,
And by the cottage gate there winds a pall;
The country suffers from a common hapless fall.

IV.

'Twas said that Henry Osgood, Alfred's sire,
Was of a family in standing good:
In England, he had been at least a squire,
But early traveling amid these woods,
He came to where an humble cottage stood,
Where dwelt a Frenchman, who had fled before
The Revolution; which, with scathing fire
Hath swept the land. He landed on our shore
With his two daughters and his wife, and nothing more.

V.

He left in France his goods and his estate,
And left a noble's ancient, worthy name;
But goods and titles all were confiscate,
And none are left to prove his ancient claim.
He called himself DeLambert, when he came,
And seemed to bear complacently his lot.
He wrought to soothe, not change his hapless fate;
The neighbors helped to rear his humble cot,
Where love alone was left to consecrate the spot.

VI.

It was a thing both strange to hear and see,
The meeting of these men of foreign birth,
Whose feud hath been the nations' rivalry;
That hath robbed both of much their dearest worth,
And left full many a corpse upon the earth.
The Frenchman, at his ease, led the discourse,
Was elder far a nobleman—and he
Knew well the power of tyranny—the source
Of frightful discord, and of man the fatal curse.

VII.

Too near the throne, he felt not unconcerned,
That when it fell its props should be cut down.
And skilled to mark the public mind, he turned
To see if aught of safety for the town
Remained. To his experienced eye, around
The horizon were nought but tempest clouds,
With fire surcharged, that fanned, would blaze and burn
Amid the havoc of a glutted crowd,
While greatness should betake itself unto the shroud.

VIII.

'Twas thus he said he left his native shore,
Exchanged a life of pomp and peril for
The wilderness; exhausted all his store
Of means, until he learned to levy war
Upon the forest tribes, rich bearing fir.
His daughters, too, acquired the art to spin;
And when the long day's toils at length were o'er,
He took more comfort then his cottage in,
Than e'er in youth he had in Paris reveling.

IX.

And Henry now forgot his prejudice,
And to the fair Annette full soon was wed.
She was the younger; had the softer eyes,
And gentler voice; was called the sweetest rose
Of all the gay profusion which composed
The court of France. The other was, 'tis true,
Less fair. But then, a close resemblance
Existed between these sweet sisters two,
With hair luxuriant of darkest raven hue.

X.

Long years are past since Henry saw his prime;
And of a numerous family,
But one survived, Alfred, and he a fine
Athletic youth as you would wish to see.
His father thought him quite a prodigy:
He had his mother's hair and eyes of jet,
A form true to the sculptor's rule and line,
A temper where the graces all have met:
What more is needless praise and vain additions set.

XI.

DeLambert and his wife are gone to rest,
Within the churchyard's quiet, peaceful shade;
No more with cares of State or friends distressed.
The birch tree shades the spot where late the spade
Hath formed for them their last sweet heritage,
And early strews its leaves upon their bed,
A covering that doth lightly press
Upon the spot where lie the noble dead,
That once were little less in power than crowned heads.

XII.

A marble slab proclaims their virtues, yet
Not all. Nor all their nobleness of heart,
Nor these in pompous phrase were duly set,
But simply told the stranger that a part
Of nature's honest, rarest workmanship,
Was here reposed. Near by were lesser mounds;
The largest of these was Alice's, whom regret
We all. An angel she, which doth account
Why she should seek so soon her native mount.

XIII.

There is to some a grace divinely lent,
Like flowers that early brighten to decay,
Too pure for love's warm breath, or love's intent,
But which doth draw admiring eyes away
From grosser forms and more enduring clay.
Now Alice lived until her sixteenth year;
Her steps did lead wherever Alfred's went,
She shared his daily toil, his hopes and fears,
His childhood's waywardness in sunshine and in tears.

XIV.

She was his elder by three years, and when
She faded, like to some midsummer's dream,
Leaving the senses half bewildered then,
If she a real presence e'er had been,
Or some reflection from a world unseen;
Then Alfred sought companionship with those
Among the neighborhood, whom he might deem.
Where none were rich he little had to choose,
And all were ignorant alike of virtue's foes.

XV.

Yet these were not the world's dull peasantry,
But people from whose loins statesmen have sprung,
And warriors of renowned ability,
And orators, upon whose words have hung
Admiring senates—those have poets sung.
Their care with schools their offspring to provide,
And leave them wise, as well as great and free;
With skillful hands their fortunes to decide,
'Mid life's boisterous waves and ever veering tides.

XVI.

There was, from Henry Osgood's residence,
Distant a mile, within a pleasant vale,
A cottage, of no very great pretense;
Who entered there found welcome, never fail.
Its occupant was William Doane, a hale
And thrifty man, who lived with all in peace,
And lent his surplus to his needy friends,
And took in payment note, or bond, or lease,
Or mortgage, which he deemed were good securities.

XVII.

His native home was by the Kennebec;
And from the land of steady habits he
Had emigrated with his wife, to seek
A kinder soil, where honest industry
Returned the husbandman a larger fee.
A daughter shared their smiles and household cares;
Of quiet, gentle manners, Margaret
Was to the whole community endeared;
And rarest beauty was to her the gift of years.

XVIII.

Hers was the very soul of loveliness,
Expressed in firm, yet calm and living clay.
A Venus, nor with care or love distressed,
No flashing warmth o'erspread her cheek, to stay
A moment there and then to fade away.
Like sunset glories joined to silver sheen,
Of grandeur's airy domes entire possessed,
She walked 'mid nature's handiwork, and seemed
In humble homes, or palaces, a regal queen.

XIX.

Dear Susquehanna's vales, my native clime!
Where else should beauty find her dwelling place?
Where else should poesy beguile the mind
With dreamy visions, while doth run apace,
The sands of life, as yet, to nought but waste?
Ye are the work of the enchanter's wand,
Whose mystic power hath never painted space,
More picturesque, with primal forests crowned,
Or with the harvest sheaf of golden ingots bound.

XX.

He who hath lost upon the toilsome road,
Must back return and search about,
Lest he to market come without his load;
So I must now retrace my steps; no doubt
My story's heavy freight hath fallen out.
Three pupils sat with books, and map, and slate,
In Henry Osgood's elegant abode,
And there Mademoiselle Marie sedate,
Annette's sweet sister, toiled for them early and late.

XXI.

These three were Alice, Alfred, Margaret;
The last a child with pretty, winning ways,
And harmless innocence, a chosen pet.
And when the gentle Alice left—her days
Were then divided; half at home she stays,
The other half was with these dearest friends:
And Alfred early came, the sun as yet
O'er the horizon, scarcely seen to bend—
With her he goes, with her returns when day doth end.

XXII.

With him, it was a boyish pride to walk
Beside her then, beguiling her of fear,
And entertaining her with cheerful talk.
He was her elder more than three full years;
She was to him a sister, far more near
Than sisters mostly are, or seem to be.
'Twas thus it happened: she was taught
French, Latin, painting and embroidery,
With music, mathematics, ethics, history.

XXIII.

It was the autumn, and some years have passed
Since Alice's death; the nuts are on the ground,
And withered leaves are strewn by wintry blasts:
As thickly they are lying now around,
The foot doth press them with a rustling sound.
The husbandman, now cheerful, counts his store,
And reckons how much better than the last,
This autumn's gain; how much to add, before
He will enlarge his farm one hundred acres more.

XXIV.

The apples dropping from the parent tree,
Require the aid of willing, youthful hands;
From far they gather for the rustic bee,
In groups arrive, those hale and gleeful bands,
From hillside farms and river bottom lands.
Thus Alfred joined his comrades on one eve;
The next, and he was half way to the sea;
His sad farewell his friends at home receive,
As from his father, mother, aunt, he takes his leave.

XXV.

He stopped at William Doane's, to say farewell
To Margaret, and bade her think of him
Until he should return. He could not tell
How long his stay would be—at least some years;
Thus bade the youth the child adieu. Benign
His smile, expressing all a brother's heart;
A tear stood in his eye, and then it fell;
Yet manfully he tore himself apart,
To tread the hallowed shrine of learning and of art.

XXVI.

There is a sickness, like some mystic spell,
Comes o'er us when we leave the parent roof,
No more for us beneath its shade to dwell—
No more the tender word, the kind reproof,
For faults that could not keep the heart aloof—
A sad reflection that the world less kind,
Shall meet us, and that death's drear, hollow knell
Shall hide from sight some loved and valued friend,
Whose memory within our hearts is sacredly enshrined.

XXVII.

Five years were passed ere his return; each brought
Its change, and when they all at length were spent,
He, with degrees from Alma Mater, sought
Again his native land, now scourged and rent
By the grim hand of war which God hath sent,
To make us just unto the toiling poor,
Whom He regards with constant, tender thought;
For His elect hold not high seats of power,
But dwell content within the quiet cottage door.

XXVIII.

E'en as he crossed the threshold of his home,
He felt a loneliness within, for they,
The comrades of his youth away were gone,
Their names enrolled upon their country's page
Of honor, or asleep within her graves.
A wail came from the prisons, where grim want
Of food its thousands slew, with slow but none
Less sure and mocking torture, while their gaunt
And bloodless frames did wander moodily and faint.

XXIX.

Yet Alfred strove to cheerfully discourse
Of sights and scenes in Europe, and forget
His country's needs; and yet each sad reverse
Brought new sorrow unto his honest heart.
At length he asked that he might now depart,
To join the soldier's long and weary march;
To share his tent, his toils, his viands coarse,
To bear his luggage over woodland marsh,
And thus with patience build their triumphal arch.

XXX.

His father gave consent, reluctantly;
And he enlisted and was soon away,
Yet ere he went he called once more to see
His friend, sweet Margaret. She had that day
Returned from where the Kennebec doth stray,
'Mid forest mountains and delightful vales.
One sound alone in all there seemed to be,
The sound of clashing arms, of warriors' mail,
Or of the widows' and the lonely orphans' wail.

XXXI.

"Had I but seen her," he pondered oft,
As forth he went, "I had not joined the ranks;
But now to well deserve of her, aloft
I'll climb ambition's airy way. Her thanks
Shall be my chief reward." He reached the banks
Of the Potomac's fearful, bloody stream,
And soon, by deeds of daring, gained the first
Promotion; and as death and wounds did seam
And rend, he upward rose in rank and in esteem.

XXXII.

At length there came the warm and gentle spring,
And with it, peace; with banners torn and gray,
And homeward marches brave men welcoming.
Then for the nation in its holiday,
Arose a fearful dirge, as shrouded lay,
Its ever kind and honored magistrate.
The days sped on, and good and ill they bring.
To flowers succeed the chilly winter's hate—
So man doth bow before the dark decrees of fate.

XXXII.

Alfred now sat at home, a wounded man.
As weeks flew by not much of strength returned;
His breast, from which the life-blood freely ran,
On the last battle-field, now seemed to burn
With smouldering fire and lambent flame,
Which lighted up his face, like to the glow
That evening gildes the clouds surcharged with rain;
While darkness gathers thick and fast below,
The harbinger of dreary night and bitter woe.

XXXIII.

Yet oft he spoke in cheerful tones, of past
Delightful scenes, and of the field of strife;
Spoke of the mighty chief, whose skill at last
Succeeded in preserving whole the nation's life.
Whose calm resolve was stronger than device
Of wily foes; or chiefs renowned of old,
Exemplar that the simple virtues hath,
Whose honor may be neither bought or sold
By bribes of power or heaps of glittering gold.

XXXIV.

The tranquil radiance one summer's eve,
Stole through the leafy screen, suffusing all
The arbor with a halo such as weave
The fairies in our dreams, as night doth fall,
In viewless silken curtains from the wall
Of God's empyreal domains. There sat
Alfred and Margaret. Hand doth cleave
To hand, and while the day advances late,
A lover's tale is told and love bewails its fate.

XXXV.

"I've loved thee, dearest, kindest Margaret,
With love too pure for earth; too strong for death.
For soon I must go forth to join the great
And ever marching ranks, devoid of breath:
Yet I will wait thee there where God hath said,
There is no pain, no sorrow's fearful blight,
To damp our joys; where love is only met
By love eternal, 'mid the spheres of light,
Where joy's unmixed with grief, to day succeeds no night.

XXXVI.

"My life's a sacrifice to liberty;
The world shall date good government begun
With this, the greatest act of history,
Wherein hath been achieved the rights of man.
The martyrs of this war shall lead the van.
'Tis sweet for one's country to die: yet sweet
'Twould be to live, blest with thy company.
No more! No more! I fear thou shouldst regret
My fate, and haste my shade beyond the tomb to meet."

XXXVII.

To these words Margaret did not reply,
But starting up and bidding him good night,
Returned unto her home; tears in her eyes
Stood trembling, yet restrained, so that they might
Not witness bear, to any other sight.
And Alfred sought his couch, from which, alas!
He never went forth until the day
When he Death's open gates was called to pass.
So fades man's glory, like as to the tender grass.

XXXVIII.

The autumn came; and when the chilly wind,
With storms of sleet and frost had turned the leaves
A russet hue, one eve we went to find
Alfred was dying. O'er him much did grieve
His parents and his aunt, sole relatives.
And he, their hope, cut off in early years
Of manhood's usefulness. The neighbors kind
Stood round with words of sympathy. Their fears
In whisper tones expressed, or silent dropped their tears.

XXXIX.

Farewell! Thou sleepst in dreamless slumber crowned
With laurel wreath—thy name enrolled within
Historic page—peaceful sleep! The mound
That holds our soldier's dust shall ever be
To liberty a consecrated shrine.
The bard of future times, with sweetest lay,
Shall mark your battle-fields as holy ground,
Your deeds redeem from memory's decay,
And shed the bright effulgence of eternal day.

XL.

Farewell, sweet Margaret! No lips of thine
Have told the tale of early love's distress;
But o'er thy countenance, a glow divine,
Of resignation and of gentleness,
The fruit of keenest suffering, no less
Hath blended all thy charms, and added grace,
Until thy wondrous beauty peerless shines,
Saintlike and sad, that seems on earth misplaced:
That while thou hast the form of clay, an angel's face.

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